

Abstract

Embodiments of a method of conducting a customer-retaining program of the present invention are disclosed comprising the steps of establishing a credit based account or a bank account with the sponsor of the incentive program for the benefit of a customer, providing to the customer an investment account employing a customer-chosen investment instrument which is arranged by the sponsor, funding the investment account, for the benefit of the customer, by sponsor-offered rebate which is determined by a predetermined but periodically adjustable percentage of the total amount of money that the customer has paid for purchasing goods or services from a merchant through the credit based account or the bank account established with the sponsor in a particular period of time, periodically transferring the amount of the rebate to the customer's investment account or, if there requires a division of the rebate which depends on the number of years of participation in the incentive program, periodically transferring a portion of the amount of the rebate to the customer's investment account while depositing the rest of the amount of the rebate temporarily into a match account which employs the same investment instrument that the customer chose for his or her investment account. Moreover, disclosed is an additional step providing a merchant offered rebate to the customer for purchasing goods or services from the merchant. Embodiments of a system of supporting a customer-retaining program are also disclosed. The system includes a means for collecting and storing transactional information which further includes customer identification information gathered by an identification means, a computer data processing device which consists of a centralized data storage device with a data input device, a centralized data processing center which is loaded with software programs for calculating the amount of the rebate offered by the sponsor of the incentive program to a customer as well as generating promotion materials for the purpose of informing the customer about the availability of the incentive program, at least one distributed data storage device with a data input device and such a distributed data storage device is in communication with the centralized data storage device and the centralized data processing center via an electronic data transmission device, a means for transferring funds, a means for reporting the rebate amount to the customer, and a means for promoting the customer-retaining program to the customer. In addition, if a merchant offers a rebate to the customer for purchasing the merchant's goods or services, a means for calculating the amount of the rebate offered by the merchant and a means for reporting the merchant offered rebate amount to both the customer and the merchant are included in the system.

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